

THE Goldfinch

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Margaret Atherton Bonney, Editor

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The Iowa History Magazine for Young People

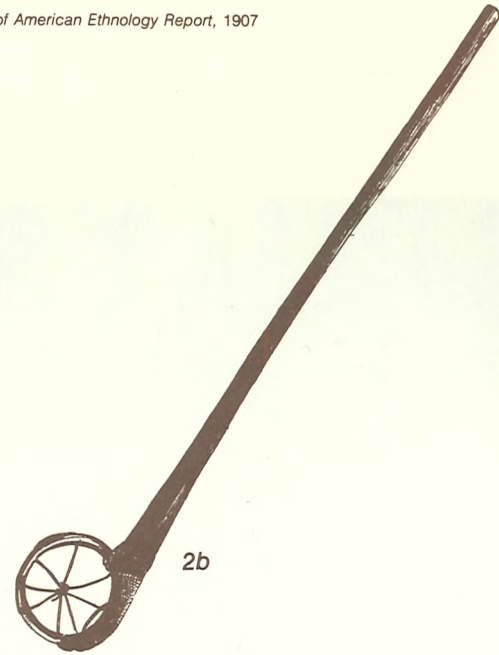
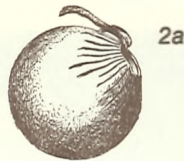
The Sporting Life

Sports have become a part of our everyday life. People have liked to play since prehistoric times. In the earliest **societies** play gradually developed into games. Then, as each society became more organized with its own special laws and customs, some of the games became more organized too, and developed into sports. The word sports often includes activities like hunting, fishing, and hiking. In this *Goldfinch*, we define sport as a contest that includes physical activity, ending with a win-loss outcome.

society *n.* — community of people together at a particular time and place.

A ball (diameter $2\frac{3}{4}$ inches)
and racket ($29\frac{1}{2}$ inches long);
Mesquakie tribe, Iowa.

Bureau of American Ethnology Report, 1907



SANTEE DAKOTA INDIAN BALL PLAY. *Sporting contests among the Indian tribes who once lived in the Iowa region included ball games, archery, and racing. A ball game called racket, or lacrosse, was played with a ball made of buckskin stuffed with hair, and a racket. Goals made of two poles were stuck in the ground at each end of a three or four hundred-yard playing field.*

Sports were a part of the way of life in many ancient societies. In ancient Egypt, men competed in tug-of-war, club throwing, wrestling, knife throwing, and swimming. Women took part in acrobatics. Persians held sports festivals for horse races, javelin throws, and wrestling competitions.

In Greece, the Olympic Games became the most outstanding of the ancient sports festivals. The games began more than 2,700 years ago with a single foot race about 200 yards long. As years passed, other events added to the excitement of the festival including wrestling, discus throw, javelin throw, and broad jump. Only men were allowed to participate in or watch the ancient Olympics. Kept out of the games, Greek women planned their own contests of foot races called the Heraea. The Olympic Games were held for over a thousand years. By that time, Greece was a part of the Roman Empire.

By the year 500 the strong Roman Empire no longer existed. The way people lived began to change. People lived in small villages and spent their time growing and cooking food, making clothes and tools, and hunting. Only a very few people of wealth had free time for sports. They had time for recreation because servants did the work for them.

For many centuries sports remained an activity for the wealthy. It was still this way when colonists began to arrive in the New World. At first, the colonists worked to clear land, raise food, and build homes. But as the

competition *n.* — a contest between rivals.



RUSH PARK, INDEPENDENCE. A horse race could be held on a stretch of land in the countryside or at a track built specially for racing. Many Iowa towns built horse racing tracks during the nineteenth century. Rush Park was the grandest track in the state.

struggle for survival became a thing of the past, sporting events became part of colonial life, especially on holidays. Horse and foot races, as well as shooting matches, were favorites. Religious beliefs prevented some of the first colonists, especially those in New England, from participating in games. The religions of these people taught that play was unacceptable. Hard work was necessary for someone to become a good person. But sometimes work and play were combined when people got together to do a job like corn husking or barn raising. After the work was done, they held contests and played games.

Through the years, when the colonies became an independent nation and expanded westward, sports changed very little. Horse races increased in popularity. Foot races and wrestling remained important. People also played several different kinds of ball games.

Following the Civil War, new

inventions changed the lives of most Americans, and the growth of sports was one result of these changes. Improved **technology** and new machinery helped people do their work in a shorter time than before. Laws shortened the working day to ten hours. Workers found they had free time to take part in sports or to be **spectators**. About the same time, more railroad lines were being built, connecting villages and towns with one another. With such good transportation available, spectators could travel almost anywhere by railroad to watch a sporting event. Railroad companies even offered special rates and schedules to take spectators to and from games. Team members also traveled by rail to play opponents away from home. Cities in Iowa and the rest

technology *n.* — the practical use of scientific research and knowledge.

spectator *n.* — a person who looks on without taking part.

of the nation became centers for organized **professional** sports, and strong rivalries developed.

It even became possible for more people to take part in sports because new machinery manufactured sports equipment at a low cost. Mail-order catalogs made sporting equipment available for just about everyone. Because manufacturers used sewing machines, inexpensive team uniforms could be purchased instead of home-made. With all this interest and participation in sports, it was necessary that people play by the same rules. Handbooks were written and published so that everyone would know how to play a game the same way.

By the turn of the century, sports — with its athletes in towns, schools, and colleges — had become a part of the American way of life. Telegraph lines carried the game scores from coast to coast in a matter of minutes, and newspapers started sports pages for their readers. Printing press improvements shortened the time between the writing of a story and its printing. The camera and photo printing process provided actual pictures of the athletes, instead of drawings. A competitive desire to develop athletic skills had captured the nation.

Sporting interest was not limited to the United States; it was world-wide. In 1896, the Olympic Games began again.

professional *adj.* — for pay; not amateur.

The games were for **amateur** male athletes from all over the world. Women competed in the Olympics for the first time in 1900, but only in golf and tennis. But no women athletes from the United States took part.

Americans opposed any active sport for women. It was believed that women were delicate beings whose place was in the home. Even though pioneer women had driven teams of horses, plowed land, and built houses, women of the 1880s and 1890s were supposed to be a very different sort of creature. Except for a few sports, like croquet or lawn tennis, women had to wait for the twentieth century before they could take part in a wider range of sports activities.

Women were not the only ones **excluded** from sports activities. During this time many people believed that those who were not of the same skin color should not be treated equally. The Civil War did not bring equality for black people. As in other areas of life in the United States, blacks were not permitted to take part in many amateur and professional sports events. In the mid-twentieth century changes began to take place.

The 1920s are often called the Golden Age of Sports. By that time, the number of working hours had decreased once again. People had more leisure time and could do things just for

amateur *n.* — person who takes part in an activity for pleasure and not for money.

exclude *v.t.* — to shut or keep out.

fun. When physical activity for women became accepted, girls and women added to the growing number of people active in sports.

It even became easier to be a spectator in the 1920s. Automobiles or **interurban** trolley cars took people where they wanted to go, and lots of people wanted to go watch sporting events. High schools, colleges, and cities encouraged spectators by building stadiums for athletic events. Even the people who could not make it to a game could listen to a play-by-play description once radio stations started broadcasting games. Sports had become one of the major interests of the country.

By the 1950s, sporting events appeared on television sets. Airplanes provided transportation for teams to cross the continent to play one another. Eventually, new building methods allowed larger stadiums to rise on college campuses and in major cities. Spectator sports continued to catch the country's interest. At the same time, people still continued to take up sports in their leisure time. Cities and towns built tennis and basketball courts, golf courses, swimming pools, and baseball diamonds. The higher incomes of many Americans meant they could buy sports equipment for many different activities. Some say that by 1970 the country had entered a New Golden Age of Sport.

interurban *adj.* — between cities or towns.



Wheeling Around

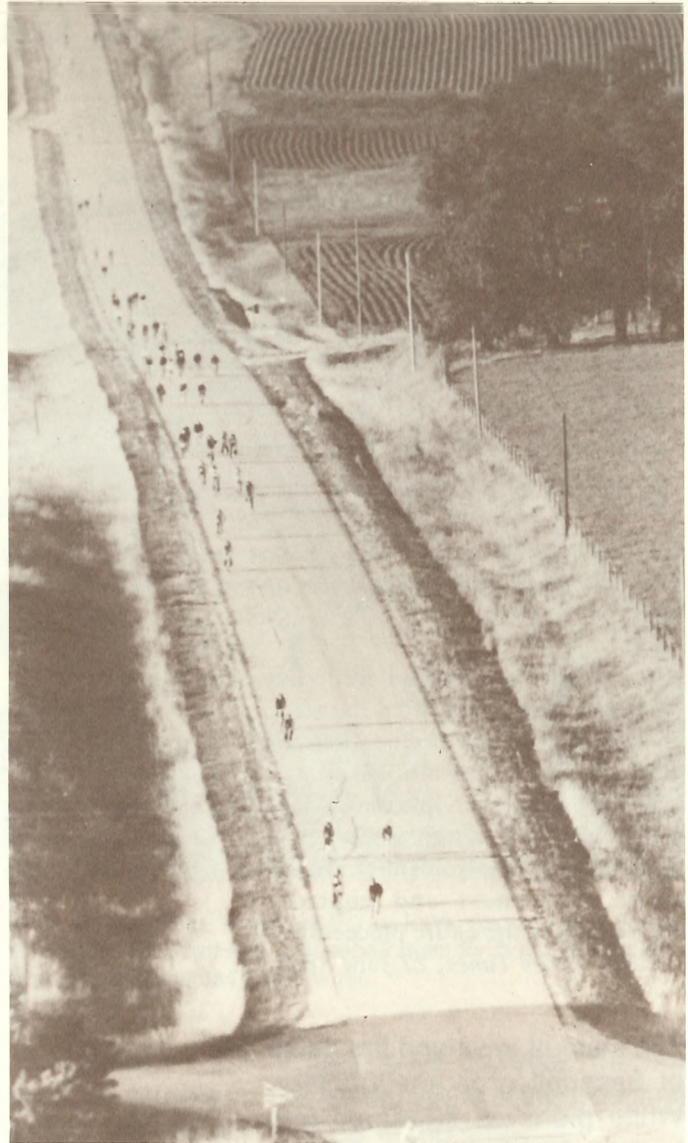
When the United States celebrated the one-hundredth anniversary of its independence in 1876, a bicycle appeared on display at the Centennial Exposition. It had one large, high front wheel and a smaller back wheel. Fifteen years later, during the 1890s, a bicycle craze swept the nation. By that time, bicycles had been redesigned with two wheels of the same size and **pneumatic** tires.

The League of American Wheelmen was organized to help popularize bicycle riding. Because the League wanted more people to ride bicycles, it encouraged races all over the country. Women could be members, but were barred from racing competition. In 1895, the League had many active members in Iowa. Some of the League members claimed that Iowa had more people riding bicycles than any state west of the Mississippi River!

Cycling influenced women's fashions. Because of the way a bicycle was built and used, women had to wear shorter skirts than they had worn before. Some daring women even wore baggy trousers called bloomers. Cyclists also worked to improve Iowa's roads and streets as well as those in the rest of the nation. At that time roads were seldom paved. To have an enjoyable ride, cyclists needed smooth roads without ruts and holes.

— Angelita Reyes

pneumatic *adj.* — operated by air pressure.



courtesy, the Des Moines Register

RAGBRAI II riders pedal northward toward Elk Horn along county road M66 in Cass County. Although RAGBRAI is not really a race, it has become a nationally famous, summertime cycling event in Iowa.



Members of a wheeling club get together for a day of racing, about 1900.

The bicycle has not put too many women in trousers — nothing will do that in this country — but it has given all women practical liberty to wear trousers if they want to.

Scribners Magazine, June 1896.

RAGBRAI *n.* — The *Des Moines Register's* Great Annual Bike Ride Across Iowa.

Take Me Out to the Ball Game



A BASEBALL GAME IN SABULA, ABOUT 1905. The grandstand at Sabula was next to a field. This photo of the Sabula game shows haystacks behind the ball field and grandstand.

The Vinton boys played well, but fate was against them from the start, and the first three or four innings demonstrated the result. Taken as a whole this was a very pleasant affair. All parties conducting themselves in a most gentlemanly manner; a true spirit of fairness and courtesy characterizing the entire proceeding.

Cedar Valley Times, 27 June 1867.

The state of Iowa and the game of baseball grew up together. While pioneers streamed into Iowa during the 1840s, the first baseball rulebook was published in the East.

Baseball became the national game after the Civil War. Soldiers had learned the game in training or prisoner-of-war camps. When they returned to their homes in all parts of the nation, they took the game with them.

Baseball caught on rapidly. A town did not need to be very large to have a baseball team. Only one year after the war teams already had been formed at Mount Pleasant, Des Moines, and Council Bluffs. The very next year, Des Moines alone had nine



THE GUTHRIE CENTER BASEBALL TEAM, ABOUT 1906.

teams, including a young people's team called the Shirttail Rangers.

When there was a home game the shops and businesses in a community closed. The townspeople and fans from nearby farms went to the ballfield. They often sat on the ground or in their horsedrawn carriages and wagons and watched the game. Excited

onlookers shouted themselves hoarse rooting for the home team.

Local ball players had pride in their team, too. At Bellevue, the players built their own ball park. When they began, the ground was rough and uneven, studded with tree stumps that had to be grubbed out. After much work

grub v. — to dig up by the roots.



MEMBERS OF THE NATIONAL AND AMERICAN LEAGUE BASEBALL TEAMS AT PELLA, IOWA, ABOUT 1955. *Some towns organized baseball teams for young people. Bellevue had a baseball team for boys 12 through 15 years old. After attitudes changed, girls played in baseball leagues too.*

the team members had the field ready for play. They did not stop there, but went on to build a grandstand for the spectators. The Bellevue Butterfingers took pride in their first-class ball park, and the citizens of Bellevue passed many pleasant afternoons there. One year, the women of Bellevue formed a team called the Bellevue Bloomers to play a special game against the men. The men's team won, 8 to 5.

If a paid player was really good, he might leave the small-town team and take a job with a professional ball club. Major professional league teams were located in other states. In 1871, an eighteen-year-old from

Marshalltown joined a professional team in Illinois. Adrian "Cap" Anson earned a place in baseball history as a top batter. But when he later became the manager of the Chicago White Stockings, he worked to keep major league baseball a racially segregated sport. There were no black players in the major leagues until 1945. Other Iowans went on to play

professional baseball through the years. Some of them became heroes of the game.

Baseball and its offshoot, softball, remained well-liked sports in Iowa. When it became acceptable, women and girls in Iowa played ball too. People of all ages still enjoy playing and watching the game at vacant lots, city parks, schools, and minor league stadiums.

HOTEL HOLLAND

 **Rockford, Ill.**

I. A. LEONARD, PROP.

RATES:
\$2.00 PER DAY.

 **Special Rates to Ball Clubs and Companies.**

A New Use for Peach Baskets



The Sigourney High School girls' basketball team played South English in 1907.

We all know how cold it gets in the winter. Back in 1892 at the Y.M.C.A. (Young Men's Christian Association) in Springfield, Massachusetts, James A. Naismith wanted to find an exciting game that could be played inside during cold, wintery days. One day he finally came up with an idea. He removed the bottoms from two peach baskets and fastened them to a gym balcony. Players on teams tried to shoot a ball up in the air so it would drop through the basket. Eventually the sport was named basketball. The game is the only American sport that did not have roots in another country. People everywhere liked the game so much that it quickly became a popular winter sport. Today, it is played year round.

Since 1892 the peach baskets have changed into iron hoops with netting. Some of the rules have changed too. But still, the only equipment needed for playing is a ball, a basket, and court space. People play basketball all over the world. In 1936, this energetic sport found a place in the Olympic Games. Teams from twenty nations participated. The first Olympic basketball games were played in honor of James Naismith.

In Iowa, several towns had their own teams. Fort Dodge had its first basketball games in 1897. By 1902 there were teams in Boone, Cedar Rapids, and Sioux City. During these early years many Iowa teams did not have a gym for playing and practicing. They often had to use the local Y.M.C.A. But basketball grew



MOULTON HIGH SCHOOL GIRLS' BASKETBALL TEAM, 1912

fast as an organized sport for boys and girls. Dubuque began high school girls' basketball in 1898. Some other towns that had early high school girls' teams were Ottumwa, Muscatine, Delhi, Greeley, Epworth, and Manchester. Correctionville also had its famous high school girls' team.

High school basketball has remained very popular in the state. State competitions are held yearly. The first boys' high school competition played in 1912. The tournament was in Iowa City with teams from



MOUNT PLEASANT HIGH SCHOOL BOYS' BASKETBALL TEAM, 1908.

Ottumwa, Sioux City, Grundy Center, and Wilton Junction. Girls' high school tournaments began in 1926 at Hampton, with teams from Audubon, Ida Grove, Mystic, and Hampton competing for the number one spot.

Today, when it is time for the annual state championships among high school teams in Iowa the Veterans Memorial Auditorium at Des Moines is packed with fans. Thousands more watch these exciting games on television.

Iowa is now a national leader in boys' and girls' organized basketball. Basketball is also played on the collegiate and professional levels. What started as a small-town recreation has become one of the foremost spectacular sporting events in Iowa.

— Angelita Reyes



LE MARS HIGH SCHOOL BOYS' BASKETBALL TEAM, ABOUT 1940.

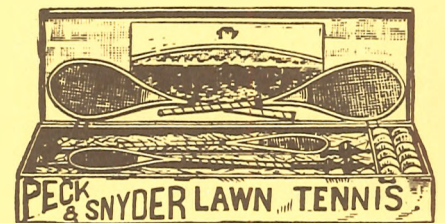
More Fun and Games

Among the many sports people enjoyed in the late nineteenth century were archery, croquet, tennis, golf, bowling, and horseshoe pitching. These sports emphasized individual skill more than teamwork. Because vigorous activity was not required, it was acceptable for women to take part in most of these sports. In addition, long dresses did not get in the way too much when women competed in these games.

— Angelita Reyes



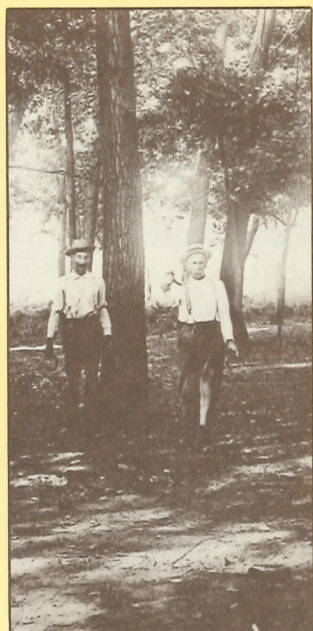
TWO WOMEN ENJOY A GAME OF CROQUET, ABOUT 1900. *To play croquet, a certain number of hoops and pegs are set up on the lawn. Each player takes a mallet and ball. The objective of the game is to strike the ball through the hoops in the proper order. The first person to finish wins. When croquet was played long ago, good manners and gentle behavior were as important as following the rules.*



WOMEN AND MEN PLAY LAWN TENNIS, ABOUT 1900.



MEN, WOMEN, AND CHILDREN AT A BOWLING ALLEY.



PITCHING HORSESHOES,
ABOUT 1900.



A GAME OF GOLF AT NEW ALBIN, 1898. When golf first became popular, it was a sport for well-to-do people because most of the golf courses were at privately-owned country clubs with high membership fees. More people began to play golf after cities and towns built public courses in the 1920s and 1930s.

The Autumn Sport



Fred Kent photo

One of many rivalries in Iowa has been between Iowa State University at Ames and the State University of Iowa at Iowa City. The game shown here was played in 1912.

Cheers fill the air and school colors brighten the crowd when football brings fans together in the autumn. The sport of football got its start in our nation's colleges. It began in eastern schools and quickly spread westward.

Football was a rough and brutal sport. Players wore no protective equipment. There were no helmets. There were few rules to protect the players' safety. Unfair play and dangerous tactics caused serious injury and even death. Officials finally changed the rules to prevent so much brutality. Even then, some colleges decided not to include football in their athletic programs for a while.

In the Midwest, football had become a part of college athletics by the 1890s. High school boys too, formed teams when they could get enough players together. At Buena Vista, where there was a high school and college in the same place, the team once included both high school and college students. At first, there was no regular schedule. Teams just challenged one another. But before the turn

of the century strong college rivalries had developed within Iowa. This rivalry quickly became part of the sport for both players and spectators.

Players who wanted to play professional ball had to leave Iowa, because there were no professional teams in the state. Until 1933, any Iowa player who was good enough could play on a professional team. After that year, black players were no

longer hired for professional play. Professional football remained a segregated sport for thirteen years. Even before 1933, black players on Iowa's college teams had faced discrimination. In 1923 this happened to Jack Trice, an Iowa State football player. Because of this kind of discrimination, Trice believed he must be outstanding when he did get the chance to play in his first game. The young player wrote down his thoughts to himself before the game against Minnesota:

My thoughts just before the first real college game of my life; the honor of my race, family and self is at stake. Everyone is expecting me to do big things. I will. My whole body and soul are to be thrown recklessly about the field. Every time the ball is snapped, I will be trying to do more than my part.

THE TEAM BUDGET

We had to have a playing field. There it was on the South Side of the campus. The 50 yard line was in a valley with a hill at either end, so that the team with the ball moved down grade to the center, and up hill the rest of the way, so naturally high scores were rare.

FIELD EQUIPMENT

6 2x4 20 foot pieces for goal posts \$18 per M (This included 8 spikes)	\$ 1.44
½ Sack of lime	.50

TEAM EQUIPMENT

11 Pr. White Painter's Pants @ \$0.75 (Turned up to the knees; Cotton pad knees & hips)	8.25
11 Old sweaters, cotton pad elbows and shoulders — (no cash outlay)	
Cotton for all purposes	1.00
11 Pr. Wool socks @ \$0.80	8.80
Our Cobbler nailed leather cleats on our old shoes (.50)	5.50
One Football	5.00
	<hr/> \$30.49
For head gear we let our hair grow.	
Credit 33 hair cuts in 3 months @ 25¢ each	\$ 8.25
Net total Field and Team Equipment	<hr/> \$22.24
A mass meeting of the student body raised a total sum of	\$23.97
Balance in treasury	\$ 1.73

A player describes the beginnings of football at Buena Vista.

Jack Trice died of injuries he received during that game. People's attitudes began to change after World War II, but there were still problems of discrimination for many years.

Football remains a popular sport in Iowa. Each fall as the high school and college students return to classes, the old rivalries are renewed. Crowds once more fill the grandstands to watch padded and helmeted athletes compete to win the game.



Wartburg's college football players celebrate in the dressing room after beating Simpson College in the 1959 final game 38-6 and winning their second Iowa Conference title.

Catch-As-Catch-Can



Frank Gotch picks up an opponent.

catch-as-catch-can *adj.* — American-style wrestling, called "catch-as-catch-can," began with neighborhood boys who tried to grip and catch their opponent in any way they could.

Five-thousand-year-old rock drawings show that wrestling is one of the oldest sports. It was a part of the ancient Olympic competitions. Wrestling has been the Japanese national sport for centuries.

In Iowa, wrestling became popular during the 1880s. Wrestlers such as Martin "Farmer" Burns from Wheatland, Iowa, wrestled for money, travelling around, calling for challengers. Farmer Burns later began a school and taught his method of wrestling. He trained Frank Gotch, who grew up on a farm near Humboldt. Gotch became a world champion **catch-as-catch-can** wrestler. Gotch was well liked in Iowa. Babies, farm equipment, buildings, and toys were named in his honor. He is still ranked among the greatest professional wrestlers in history.

Because of leaders like

Farmer Burns and Frank Gotch, amateur wrestling became an important sport in Iowa. The University of Iowa formed a team in 1911, and Iowa State began one in 1916. High school state tournaments started in 1921 when Cedar Rapids Washington won over nineteen other schools. East and West Waterloo have been powerhouses in high school wrestling.

Cornell, a small college in Mt. Vernon, produced the first Iowa team to win the national college title. Iowa State Teachers College (now the University of Northern Iowa) won in 1950. Iowa State grabbed it in 1965, and the title moved to the University of Iowa in 1975. The state of Iowa holds the record for the most schools from one state (four) to win national wrestling championships. Indeed, "catch-as-catch-can" wrestling has caught on in Iowa.

— Lisa Abel

Keep On Trackin'

courtesy of Cowles Library, Drake University



A pole vaulter clears the bar during the Iowa high school competition day at the Drake Relays.

"Are you ready?" called the starter as runners from Drake, Simpson, Des Moines, and Highland Park colleges lined up for the 1910 Drake Relays.

"To your mark . . . now get set . . ." BANG!

This could well have been the opening of the first Drake Relay, held in Iowa in 1910.

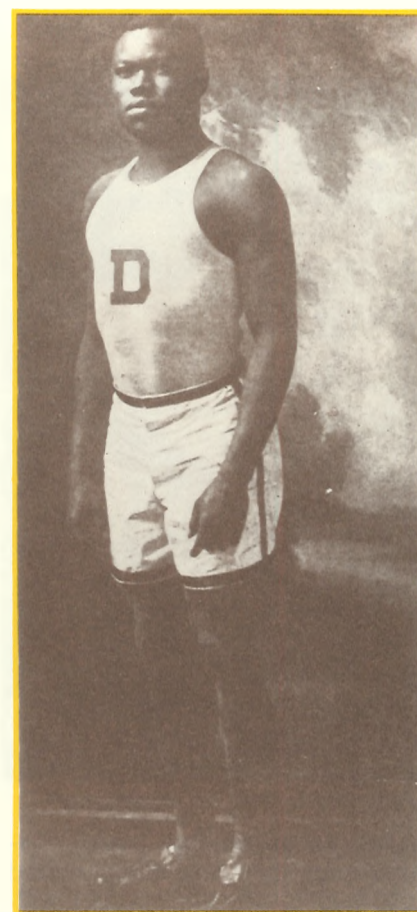
There has always been great interest in track and field events. Since earliest times, human beings have developed their running, throwing, and jumping skills. All over the world people praised athletes who showed championship strength in these track and field activities. In the twentieth century track and field has been one of the most important events in the modern Olympic Games.

Iowans also show a lot of enthusiasm for competitive

running, jumping, and throwing sports. World records have been set at the famous Drake Relays in Des Moines where athletes from many places in the United States come to compete. Although Iowa women and girls were not always included in early track and field activities, by the 1960s they began to participate in amateur competition.

As long as athletes continue to take pride in running, jumping, and throwing, track and field still will be exciting for both athletes and spectators.

— Angelita Reyes

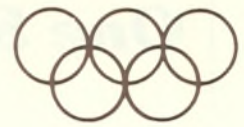


SOL BUTLER, ALL-ROUND ATHLETE AT THE UNIVERSITY OF DUBUQUE, 1915-1919.

Iowans Go to the Olympics

The Olympic Oath:

We swear that we will take part in the Olympic Games in loyal competition, respecting the regulations which govern them and desirous of participating in them in the true spirit of sportsmanship for the honour of our country and for the glory of sport.



The Olympic Games are still the oldest and most international of all sports competitions. The modern Olympics began in 1896 after a period of 1,500 years during which they were not held. The games have been staged every four years since then, except during World War I and World War II.

The Olympic Games were started again in the spirit of brotherhood among all nations. Iowans have been among the outstanding athletes in the Olympics since 1904. Over the years more than one hundred Iowans have played in the Olympic Games.

— Angelita Reyes



courtesy of Dan Gable



OLYMPIC BROAD JUMP WINNERS, 1932. First place, Ed Gordon (center), University of Iowa; second place, Lambert Redd, USA; third place, Chuhei Nambu, Japan.

DAN GABLE, WEARING HIS OLYMPIC GOLD MEDAL FOR WRESTLING, 1972. Gable was the first American to win back-to-back world championships and to go through the Olympics without having a point scored against him. He wrestled for West Waterloo High School and Iowa State University. After winning many other tournaments, he became wrestling coach at the University of Iowa.

One Step Further . . .

1. Make a list of things that helped the growth of sports. Tell how each thing made it possible for more people to participate in sports.
2. Clothing is a clue to the amount of physical activity in which women participated in the past. Find examples of women's fashions for the years 1860 through 1960. (Look in the encyclopedia or in a book about the history of costume.)
3. Is there value in taking part in sports? Think about ideas such as learning to be a good sport, teamwork, and physical fitness.
4. Do boys and girls take part in the same sports at your school? In which sports do only boys participate? In which sports do only girls participate?
5. There are many more sports than those included in this *Goldfinch*. Make a list of these sports. Tell whether you or someone you know participates in any of these sports.
6. Make a list of individual and team sports. Think of as many as you can. In which sports would people participate most of their lives? Why do you think so? (You and your friends may disagree about the answers.)
7. Sports news reporting has changed since the first reports appeared in newspapers. Read the 1867 news report for the baseball game on page 6. Find a recent baseball game newspaper report and compare the two. What differences can you find between the reports? How has sportswriting changed?



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